



MONTANA
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Northwest Montana Small Business Development Center Receives National Award for Innovation and Excellence

(HELENA) – The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) hosted at Flathead Valley Community College in Kalispell has been honored with the SBDC Excellence and Innovation Award by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) for Region VIII.

The award is given annually to honor an SBDC for excellence in providing value to small businesses and advancing program delivery and management through innovation. The regional award winner is selected from among the individual state winners. In addition to Montana, SBA's Region VIII includes Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, North Dakota and South Dakota. Montana's SBDC program is hosted by the Department of Commerce.



SBDC State Director Ann Desch, who nominated Chris Parson, the Director of the SBDC at Flathead Valley Community College, for the award, says "Chris exemplifies the best qualities of what the Montana SBDC program represents: he is disciplined, reliable, dedicated, very consistent and responsible. He is incredibly self-motivated and takes initiative to move forward with innovative projects and ideas. These characteristics have won him the respect of his peers within the statewide SBDC Network, the Flathead Valley community, and economic development circles across the state."

Chris has been the Director of the SBDC in Northwest Montana since 2008. Since joining the SBDC Network, Chris has attained numerous economic development certifications and is a trained facilitator for several entrepreneurial programs including *Peerspectives* and *Profit Mastery*. He has been a strong advocate for professional development opportunities among the SBDC Network.

Chris joined the SBDC Network after a decorated career as an officer in the United States Marine Corps. He is a veteran of the Iraq war and a combat-tested leader during three deployments to Iraq. With a combined 10 years of leadership and management skills in the Marine Corps, it's not hard to see why Chris has naturally assumed a leadership role in the SBDC Network.

Sean Becker, SBDC Business Advisor with Montana Community Development Corporation in Bozeman, says “Chris is the go-to advisor in the SBDC Network. His competent leadership among the Network and in the communities that the SBDC serves has earned him the exceptional trust of his peers, partners and business clients alike.”

Julie Jaksha, Director of the SBDC at Headwaters RC&D in Butte, agrees with Sean, observing that “Chris proactively seeks out new trainings and tools that will enhance the SBDC client experience not only at his own center, but throughout the Network as well. Chris works really well with his peers and resource partners across the state, and those relationships allow him to offer the latest and greatest resources for small businesses in Montana.”

One of those resources is *Profit Mastery: Creating Value and Building Wealth*, a unique financial management training program. In December 2012, Chris worked closely with the Montana Department of Commerce to renew a statewide license granting the SBDC Network the ability to offer Profit Mastery to the Montana small business community. The success that Chris has had providing the training in Northwest Montana has spurred an increased interest from small business owners and resource partners alike, prompting several other SBDCs to begin offering more trainings in their regions.

Jessie Felder, a small business owner in Kalispell, recently attended a Profit Mastery training facilitated by Chris. At the end of the training, he claimed that he had “learned more about how to effectively manage my business in this class than anywhere else in my life. I feel empowered.”

Susie Burch, Executive Director of Economic Development and Continuing Education at Flathead Valley Community College, could not be more pleased with how well the SBDC is fitting in with the college, saying that “the SBDC is a terrific complement to FVCC’s interest in strengthening resources for entrepreneurs.” FVCC took over hosting the SBDC from the Kalispell Chamber of Commerce in 2012.

In addition to his work with SBDC clients, Chris serves on various boards and committees in the Flathead area including Leadership Flathead, the Business Expansion and Recruitment Program, and Operation Finally Home which builds mortgage free homes for disabled veterans, and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Committee Chapter 3.

Chris will be honored at the Montana Small Business Week Awards Luncheon on June 13th in Bozeman at the Hilton Garden Inn. For more information about the event, contact Crystal Baker with the Montana SBA District Office at (406) 441-1089.

The Montana SBDC is funded in part through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration. The SBDC Network is a strategic partnership between the Montana Department of Commerce, the U.S. Small Business Administration, regional economic development organizations and the Montana higher education system. The Lead Center is located at the Montana Department of Commerce and supports ten centers around the state that provide free, confidential, one-on-one business counseling and low-cost training programs to small businesses and entrepreneurs. The Montana SBDC Network has been servicing the Montana small business community since 1989

The SBDCs are dedicated to helping small businesses throughout Montana achieve their goals of growth, expansion, innovation and success. The SBDC Directors and Business Advisors assist clients every day with the preparation and fine-tuning of business plans, financial management, operations assistance, loan applications and marketing initiatives. SBDC training seminars cover timeless small business issues such as cash flow management, as well as new and emerging trends such as the use of social networking sites to market small business.

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